

Message Text

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12

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

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R 130940Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4615

INFO AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 1896

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : PINT, TC

SUBJECT : UAE RULERS POSTPONE PERMANENT CONSTITUTION

1. ABU DHABI PRESS JULY 13 JAYS THAT UAE'S SEVEN RULERS, AT MEETING OF SUPREME COUNCIL JULY 12, DECIDED TO EXTEND THE DURATION OF UAE'S PRESENT "INTERIM" CONSTITUTION FOR ANOTHER FIVE YEARS. DECISION THEREBY INDEFINITELY PUTS ON ICE PREPARATIONS FOR "PERMANENT" CONSTITUTION WHICH VARIOUS DRAFTING COMMITTEES HAVE BEEN STRUGGLING OVER FOR PAST YEAR.

2. SHAIKH KHALIFA BIN ZAYED, WHOM I HAPPENED TO BE CALLING ON TODAY, SAID THAT DECISION HAD BEEN GREETED WITH VIRTUALLY UNANIMOUS RELIEF BY ALL OF THE RULERS, SINCE ATTEMPT TO DRIVE THROUGH NEW CONSTITUTION WOULD HAVE LED TO SERIOUS DISPUTES AMONG RULERS OVER PROPOSED CHANGES. I ASKED KHALIFA WHAT THIS IMPLIED FOR SHAIKH ZAYED'S CONTINUED TENURE AS PRESIDENT, SINCE HE WAS ENDING HIS FIVE-YEAR TERM THIS DECEMBER. KHALIFA SAID HE WAS SURE THAT THERE WOULD BE SUPREME COUNCIL MEETING AT SOME POINT AS DATE APPROACHED TO REELECT HIS FATHER TO SECOND
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5-YEAR TERM, ACTION WHICH HE BELIEVED WOULD RECEIVE UNANIMOUS SUPPORT

FROM

OTHER RULERS. KHALIFA SAID THAT SOME TIME AGO SHAIKH ZAYED HAD OFFERED TO STEP ASIDE AT THE END OF HIS TERM AND LET SHAIKH RASHED OF DUBAI BE PRESIDENT FOR THE NEXT 5 YEARS. RASHED SAID NO THANKS, HE REALLY DIDN'T WANT THE JOB.

3. COMMENT: DECISION TO DEFER ATTEMPT TO DRAFT NEW CONSTITUTION APPEARS TO BE WISE ONE. IT REMOVES POTENTIALLY DIVISIVE ISSUE FROM RULERS' COUNCILS AT TIME WHEN THEIR RELATIONS ARE REASONABLY HARMONIOUS. MOREOVER, CONSTITUTION, WHICH FOUR YEARS AGO WHEN INDEPENDENCE BEGAN WAS IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT EMBODIED CONTRACTUAL BASIS FOR ASSOCIATION AMONG EMIRATES, HAS BEEN SUPERCEDED BY ACTUAL POLITICALSITUATION TODAY, WHICH REFLECTS MANY SMALL STEPS OVER PAST SEVERAL YEARS WHICH ARE STEADILY MOVING THIS COUNTRY TOWARD BECOMING UNITARY STATE. RULERS ARE THUS SENSIBLE NOT TO INVITE DISPUTES AMONG THEMSELVES THROUGH STERILE EXERCISE OF TRYING TO DEFINE THEIR PRESENT RELATIONSHIP IN WRITTEN FORM.
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